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Visual aids are considered in relation to their place in second language learning as a means of avoiding native language interference. The proper use and construction of visual aids is discussed according to principles of causality, parallelism, and contrast. For related documents, see FL 000 823 and FL 000 467. (AF)

The following paper was read at the Tenth International Congress of Linguists, Bucarest, September, 1967. Mr. Fleming is the author of the series of Macmillan Cineloops *Les aventures de la famille Carré* and well known for his arguments in support of the use of visuals in language teaching. His three principles of causality, parallelism, and contrast, exemplified in the latter part of this paper, are particularly relevant for the design and use of audio-visual materials.

The Structured Response-Evoking Potential of Organised Visual Communicators

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The organisation of the visual component

I am concerned with the problem of harnessing organised visual communicators to the task of meaningful, efficient and psychologically sound foreign language teaching and learning. Above all I am concerned with the creation of audio-visual teaching systems whose structured, unambiguous response-evoking potency is optimal in the language class.

The didactically organised visuals are to be a link, a bridge built to avoid the use of the mother tongue during primary and secondary language courses, and particularly during the first few years of second language learning.

The modern language methodologist is compelled to study the problems of the fidelity of pictures referring to textual segments¹, and of the unambiguous visual mediation of structures as well as of verbal content — because language arises out of our coming to terms with what we experience with all our senses. *Sprache ist ein geistiges und sinnliches Bezwingen von Welt, eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Umwelt, — eine Stellungnahme zu dem Erlebten. — Le vécu est du vécu parlé. Le langage est une vie, notre vie et celle des choses nues. La vision est palpation par le regard.*^{2, 2a, 2b}

We cannot, particularly during earlier second language teaching, ignore the importance of the contribution to the processes of foreign language learning of the organised visual component, because our students do not learn the target language as the child learns his mother tongue,

because we cannot send our learners for long periods into the target language country, and because it is experiential "reality" that forces us to come to terms with it verbally.

Hence it is in the interest of both learner and teacher that we should recreate significant moments of time of the foreign reality, and that we should anchor permanently within these projected, recreated moments of reality . . . carefully graded basic structures of the language to be learned.

The student is, therefore, to learn the basics (*das Mosaik*) of the target language in situations which, although artificial because recreated (drawn, photographed), are, nonetheless, similar to those he might well experience if he were moving within the foreign sign-culture.

A visual grammar of French

The creation of a visual grammar of French, in which pictorial referents, containing selective semantic information, are constructed so as to mediate the full and graded range of *structures fondamentales*, tied to the full range of key verbs operating in key tenses, including extrapolations enabling intensive drill in a specific structure or tense, . . . the creation of such a visual grammar mediating meaning and providing variety of drill of chosen "bits of language", would present an attempt at arriving at a synthesis of what is best in the "structuralist" and "direct" methods of teaching and learning a foreign language.³

There is no basic incompatibility between these two approaches, since it is possible to control the disciplined build-up of structures within a system of visual communicators drawn from the patterns of reality around us.⁴

At the same time, it must be stated that all work aimed at establishing a set of basic structures and a basic vocabulary, inevitably has an element of the arbitrary about it . . . *comme toute analyse qui se propose de réduire à un nombre limité d'unités de base la complexité du réel.*⁵ Equally it is true that there is no inescapable logic in the creation of foreign language learning/teaching systems. *Es gibt keine unabänderliche Logik bei dem Erschaffen unserer Lehrmittel, wohl aber ein auf Erfahrung und Wissen sowie schriftstellerischer und künstlerischer Gabe begründetes, rigoroses Aufbauen und Gliedern des Systems, in welchem sich das beschreibende und das dialogische Element der Sprachleistung in harmonischer Weise ergänzen.*²

The ability to orientate ourselves in space and time conditions the integration and stabilisation of the human personality in its natural and social milieu⁶. Equally the opportunity given to the second language learner to operate within recreated segments of the foreign sign-culture—through the medium of a pictorial grammar of the target language—will, I submit, powerfully and positively affect the student's learning processes from the point of view of (a) memorisation, (b) motivation, (c) observation and development of analytical faculties, (d) increasing and deepening awareness, leading to deeper comprehension of the function and range of applicability of specific "bits of language", operating within the sentence.

The optimal exploitation of visuals

Under what conditions can a picture be said to function optimally for the purpose of facilitating the learning and teaching of the "cornerstones" of a second language?

The value of a picture lies in its information content. The information contained in a picture may be considered as the measure of order and organisation of recreated reality. The organisation of this pictorial reality depends, in the final

analysis, on our lesson aim, but every sample of a didactically ordered visual communicator mediates limited lexis and structural content, to be taught at a specific time and level for reasons which the individual teacher will be able to define clearly.

A teacher may make minimal or maximal demands in his linguistic exploitation of the pictured reality, but he must be aware of what is meant by the terms minimal, maximal and optimal exploitation of the visual referent.

This ordering of the recreated reality, on a basis of selective information, includes the choice of elements, the visual ordering of such elements, as well as their methodological treatment.

For the purpose of earlier modern language learning word and picture are two key constituents, which act like a range-finding device, pinpointing meaning. The two, in reducing each other's ambiguity, tie down the application.

There are both in oral and written communication, as in everything touching upon human endeavour, elements of ambiguity, possibility, probability and near-certainty. Equally there may be these elements tied to the interpretation of pictured reality.

What we *must* avoid in organised structural visual mediators is ambiguity in interpretation, whilst we must also be aware of the significance of organised, developing pictorial uncertainty and probability, so as to increase the measure of information of a visual referent at the right moment.

Cause, effect, and consequence

In the pictorial sequence . . . *se couper le doigt, s'écrier, s'évanouir* . . . the probability of the occurrence of the verb *s'écrier* is considerable. Equally the probability of the verbs *rire* or *sourire* is nought. The information element of *s'évanouir* is bigger than nought, since there is a strong possibility at least that the third verb in this sequence may be *se panser* (*panser*) *le doigt*.

In a visual sequence showing a man lying on the ground, and a cyclist standing over him, having just bowled over the man on the ground,

author and artist have the choice of organising this visual referent so as to force either the reply *Non, il ne va pas se relever*, or *Oui, il va se relever*.

What are the principles of organisation of structured visual communicators? Which principles must we apply in the construction of these teaching tools, so that they may function optimally?

There is first the principle of causality. It represents the relationship between different events connected through cause, effect and consequence. Let us consider the following sequence: *Un homme est étendu par terre. Pourquoi? — Il a eu un accident. Un cycliste l'a renversé. Il a été renversé par un cycliste. Il a été blessé.* The second picture shows this man in hospital, with one leg encased in plaster: *Le voilà au lit. Pourquoi? Parce qu'il s'est cassé la jambe. Peut-il marcher maintenant? Non, il ne peut pas marcher. Pourquoi? — Parce qu'il a la jambe droite plâtrée.* Show this man leaving hospital in a third picture, happily on his way home again: *Maintenant il rentre chez lui. Il peut marcher de nouveau, parce qu'il est guéri.* Exploiting the cause, effect and consequence relationship we could now refer back to this person's stay in hospital: *Quand il avait la jambe plâtrée, il ne pouvait pas se lever (marcher). Pourquoi? — Parce qu'il s'était cassé la jambe. Comment s'était-il cassé la jambe? Un cycliste l'avait renversé. Il avait été renversé par un cycliste.* The degree of grammatical exploitation of the visual sequence depends on standards reached and lesson aims.

Parallelism and contrast

The second principle of organisation is that of parallelism, which strengthens the principle of causality. Its essence is a positive comparison. A certain event is shown twice on the same field of visual array, but in differing form: *A fait son devoir en regardant la télévision. B le fait sans la regarder. A conduit sa voiture en regardant tout droit devant lui (en tenant le volant fermement des deux mains). B la conduit en embrassant sa fiancée. Il conduit d'une main, etc.*

The third principle inherent in the organisation of good visual structural mediators is that

of contrast or negative comparison. A picture showing a boy holding a football, whatever that boy's facial expression or body movement may be, cannot mediate the meaning *il ne veut pas rendre le ballon*. Add another boy to this situational picture, making specific extra-linguistic, but highly meaningful gestures tied to a relevant facial expression, and show the mother of the boy grimly holding on to the football, speaking to her son and pointing towards the empty-handed, expectant lad, clearly visually depicted as wanting and expecting to get his ball back. . . . we have then organised our visual referent so that a specific silent dialogue between viewer/learner and the picture supposed to mediate selective information, may ensue. This silent dialogue crystallises itself into an unambiguous interior monologue,— and this already prior to the semantic oral exploitation (comment) relating to this situation. This interior monologue would then be of the following order: *A tient un ballon. Mais B veut avoir ce ballon. Le ballon n'est pas à A. Il est [probablement] à B. A ne veut pas rendre le ballon à B. La femme qui parle (la mère de ce garçon) lui dit: Rends le ballon à B! (Rends-lui le ballon.) Il n'est pas à toi. Il est à lui!*

The viewer/learner has identified himself with the persons confronting each other on this "image de situation". As Ferenczi correctly says: *Ce n'est pas le fil des événements qui en dernier ressort est en cause, mais la motivation subjective des figurants.*⁷

The potential of organised visuals

We must exploit optimally the phenomenon frequently observed in classes where a foreign language is taught by associating, from the very beginning, the sound patterns with their visual contextualisations: A rapid neutralisation of mother-tongue interference on the part of the learner — *Dans l'image la personne humaine, étant donné son intériorité et son autonomie de comportement, constitue un centre privilégié d'attention et de décision perceptives.*⁷

That the effect of visual impact on the senses has a profound influence over our capacity to interpret our conscious reality is beyond doubt.

The effect on the learner of intelligent use of rigorously and dynamically organised visual

mediators of legitimately provocative content, conveying understanding of structures and tense within a particularly relevant moment in time, . . . is one of creating epistemic curiosity, crystallising itself into epistemic behaviour in the language lesson. Such curiosity, a condition of intense arousal, and such behaviour, are directed towards and reinforced by acquisition of knowledge.⁸ Whatever methods and materials increase the learner's and teacher's enthusiasm, and make for greater efficiency in the process of foreign-language acquisition, must be welcome to colleagues and students everywhere.

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